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THE MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP

AND

CREDIBILITY OF THE PENTATEUCH.

BY THE

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"THE AUTHENTICITY AND MESSIANIC INTERPRETATION OF THE PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH VINDICATED," "COMMENTARY ON THE PROPHET JEREMIAH"
(SPEAKER'S COMMENTARY), ETC.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:

56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

Argument of the Tract.

The author first shows that the writer of the Pentateuch displays an exact knowledge of the customs and topography of Chaldea, Canaan, Egypt, and the Desert of the Wandering, (in all which countries our knowledge has of late been greatly increased by the decypherment of cuneiform and Egyptian inscriptions, and by the work of the Ordnance Survey of the Wilderness and of the Palestine Exploration Fund, with the result in all cases of confirming the Biblical narrative); and that Moses alone possessed this vast and accurate knowledge. He next shows that the position of the tribe of Levi was so inferior to that of the rest in all worldly advantages that it is inconceivable that they should have submitted to it unless they had in compensation religious and spiritual prerogatives. He also gives reasons for the partial observance of the Mosaic Law in Palestine; and proves that its promulgation would have been impossible at any and every period after the conquest. Finally, he combats the theory that though the Pentateuch was Mosaic, the three legal codes contained in it were of late and varying dates, by showing that it is destitute of proof and contrary to facts.

THE MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP

AND

CREDIBILITY OF THE PENTATEUCH.

The Books of the Old Testament a message from God to our souls.

HE question of the authorship of the Books of the Old Testament is usually one of secondary importance until we reach the prophetic writings. Even of all the Old Testament Scriptures we may say that as regards our faith little depends upon their human origin. For if they are what they claim to be, they are a message from God to our souls. Many, of course, deny this claim; it is, they say, a thing impossible. God never has, and never could, speak to man. But if He has spoken to man—and for believing this there are many valid reasons—no books have so manifest a claim to be His words as those of the Bible. Their human authorship, therefore, sinks into insignificance compared with the momentous question whether they are a revelation of God's will to man. And it is worth observing that the writers themselves attached no value to the part they had taken in the

The human authorship a matter of comparative insignificance.

The authors of the sacred books do not obtrude themselves.

matter. There is no pride of authorship about them. They usually make no reference to themselves, but are solely occupied with the great message which they were commissioned to bear.

No doubt one reason of this reticence on the part of the writers is the extreme antiquity of the Scriptures. The earlier books were composed when the art of writing was in its infancy, when writing materials were of the simplest kind, and when but few persons could either make records of events, or read them when recorded. And it is a well-established law of the Holy Scriptures that in their outward form they were subject to the conditions of the times when they were written.

The art of writing in its infancy when they were written.

The Bible a book of miracle.

The Bible is a book of miracle, in which from time to time, at rare and distant intervals, God suspends the ordinary course of nature for some special purpose, as a "sign" to men. For this is the correct translation of the word used in the Old and New Testaments to express these extraordinary interpositions of God's power. But there is never anything magical in the Bible, and the writers of its many books are never lifted out of the moral and mental state of things among which they lived; nor are their intellectual endowments or physical qualities changed. Jeremiah naturally possessed no gift of genius, or skill in oratory; inspiration did not give them. He did possess high moral qualities, and these, sanctified by God's Spirit,

The writers not lifted out of the state of things in which they lived.

Their moral and other qualities sanctified.

made him one of the foremost of the prophets. St. Paul was subject apparently to a physical infirmity which compelled him to dictate his epistles to a scribe. There is naturally in them the vivacity of style usual in spoken discourses, but with the usual drawback, that the logical connexion is mental, and that to understand them we must study the course of St. Paul's thoughts.

The source of many modern difficulties.

In the Old Testament many of our modern difficulties arise from the demand, unconsciously often made, that everything should be in accordance with nineteenth century advancement. But the gift of inspiration, and the watchful care of the Spirit that in the historical books the subjects selected and the method of treating them should be for the edification of the Church, did not raise the writers above the conditions of their own times. And in this matter of authorship we find, when we turn to the *Records of the Past*,[1] translated from Egyptian, Ninevite, and Babylonian sources, that the writers seldom refer to themselves. The older books of the Bible follow the same rule, in which nevertheless we recognize something providential. For it ought to lead us to think more of Him whose word it is, than of the human hand which wrote it.

The growth of interest in the question of the human authorship.

In course of time an interest gradually grew up in this question, and we find in the uninspired

[1] Translated by Birch, Rawlinson, Sayce, and others. London.

headings prefixed to a large number of the Psalms, an attempt made to settle their date and authorship. And occasionally the matter has become one of large importance, because of the course of modern criticism. It is a question of great value in our days, whether the Book of Isaiah is an anthology made up of fragments, culled from lost works composed by numerous writers, or the composition of one man. And so with the Pentateuch. Modern criticism has made the most of all the difficulties necessarily found in connexion with a book of such extreme antiquity. It has used these difficulties to discredit the book, and even to tear it to pieces, and assign the fragments to a host of nameless persons. But though Moses himself followed the same impersonal manner as was usual with all primitive writers, yet there is in Exodus xxiv. 4 the assertion that Moses wrote all the laws at that time given, and, as we think, in the Book of Deuteronomy words which ascribe to him the whole Pentateuch. If this interpretation be correct, it becomes no mere archæological question, as might be that of the authorship of the Books of Judges or of Samuel. The veracity of Holy Scripture is at stake; and besides this, the authorship of Moses, for which there is ample proof, gives a solid foundation for the genuineness of all the Old Testament Scriptures. If there be strong and

Importance of the question of the human authorship of the Book of Isaiah and of the Pentateuch.

Modern criticism makes the most of the difficulties found in the Pentateuch.

The whole Pentateuch ascribed to Moses.

The veracity of Holy Scripture involved in the Mosaic authorship.

abundant evidence for this conclusion, most of the remaining difficulties, debated so warmly, sink into minor importance.

The testimony of the Pentateuch to its authorship.

Let me first state what is the testimony of the Pentateuch itself as to its authorship. We find, then, in Deuteronomy xxxi. 24–27, the statement that "when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, Moses commanded the Levites which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. For I know thy rebellion," etc. Now, we must not conceal the fact that great diversity of opinion exists as to the meaning of "the words of this law." Some commentators consider that it refers only to the Book of Deuteronomy, and point out in support of their view that the reason alleged for thus giving the Israelites the words of the law in writing, is the fact that they had always been so rebellious in their conduct, and had so resisted the introduction of the Mosaic institutions among them. And, undeniably, it is the case that the more kindly and social side of the Mosaic law is pointed out in the Book of Deuteronomy, and the effort made to commend it to the affections of the people. It is equally the case that, until the return from the exile at Babylon, the Israelites

Diversity of opinion as to the meaning of "the words of this law."

were by no means zealous for their law, and gave it at most a half-hearted obedience. Again, other commentators consider that it was only such a summary of the law as the kings were commanded to copy out each for himself (Deut. xvii. 18); or such a summary as was to be written very plainly upon stones covered with plaister, set up on Mount Ebal, and which also is called, "all the words of this law" (xxvii. 3). Finally, others hold that Deuteronomy was strictly no part of the law. For it consists of addresses made to Israel when, at the end of their forty years' sojourn in the wilderness, they were finally mustered for the conquest of Palestine. During a large portion of this long period the mass of the people had been dispersed throughout the wilderness, then a comparatively well-watered land, occupied with the pasturing of their herds. But as the time drew near for the conquest of Canaan, Moses gathered them to him at his head-quarters at Kadesh (Num. xx. 1; xxxiii. 36), and naturally recapitulated to them the chief points of their law, and tried to commend it to their allegiance.

Deuteronomy a recapitulation of the chief points of the law.

In support of this, which seems the most probable view, we must further point out that Moses renewed the covenant with the people, when on their march they had reached the borders of the land of Moab (Deut. xxix. 1). And nothing could be more probable and reasonable than such a pro-

Facts corroborative of this view.

ceeding. For the generation had passed away with whom the covenant had been made in Horeb, and for the mass of the people dispersed far and wide in the wilderness, the Mosaic law had practically been in abeyance. It was intended for the Israelites when settled in a land of their own, and until then it was impossible to keep it. Thus they were not even circumcised (Josh. v. 5), and offered no sacrifices (Amos v. 25). These addresses, therefore, of which the Book of Deuteronomy consists, were of the highest practical value and usefulness, but were not the law. They were intended to bring back the hearts of the people to the law, to renew their acquaintance with it, and to prepare the way for its observance when, upon the conquest of Canaan, the time had come for practising it.

The purpose of the Mosaic law.

The practical value and intention of the addresses in Deuteronomy.

Very probably, like the Song of Moses in chap. xxxii., and his blessing in chap. xxxiii., the three addresses were left in separate documents, and placed together after his death. The use of the word "book," Hebrew *sepher*, in chap. xxxi. 24, 26, implies that the material employed was some preparation of the skins of animals, and Herodotus tells us that the Phœnicians were the first to employ skins in this way (Herod. v. 58). As he adds that many barbarous tribes still used such skins, it is evident that they were but roughly prepared, and were unworthy of the name of parchment, which was first invented at Pergamos, many ages

Materials used in writing.

after this time. As we find a Hittite town, assigned after the conquest to the tribe of Judah, called Kirjath-Sepher (Josh. xv. 15), we gather that the Hittites were versed in the art of thus preparing skins; and with this agrees the fact that the Khita or Hittites constantly appear in Egyptian monuments, long before and during the age of Moses, as accomplished scribes. Moses would have no difficulty in obtaining this writing material, or even the knowledge of the method of preparing it, which must have been brought to Egypt by many members of this nation. There is therefore no difficulty in the command given to Moses, to write a memorial of events in the *sepher*, the skin on which a record was kept by him of events (Exod. xvii. 14); nor in the halting places of the Israelites being registered in a similar way (Numb. xxxiii. 2). For, however simple and primitive may have been the writing materials elsewhere spoken of (Deut. xxvii. 2, 3), Moses possessed in the skins of animals an abundant and convenient article; and prepared even as they were for the covering of the ark, for which they were made capable of taking a dye (Exod. xxxix. 34), they would not be unfit for writing upon, especially as the ink was thick and glutinous, and painted upon the skin with a reed.

Moses had the means of writing.

The addresses contained in Deuteronomy probably left by Moses as separate documents.

Most probably, therefore, the addresses which form the Book of Deuteronomy, and which were spoken to the people at the very close of Moses'

life, were left by him as separate documents, each written on its own roll of skin. And in a similar manner the Song of Moses, and the Blessing of the Tribes, both of which were probably written by Moses during the long halt at Kadesh, would each be copied upon a skin by itself.

The Song of Moses and the Blessing of the tribes also separate

Now, the first thirty chapters of Deuteronomy consist of these three addresses, placed one after another; but, beginning at chap. xxxi., we have a history of the last days of the great legislator's life, written, as the manuscripts of the Syriac version assert, by Joshua. The tradition is at least probable, though really it matters little who wrote this narrative; but it does not profess to have been written by Moses, and chap. xxxiv. could not have been so written. Chaps. xxxii. and xxxiii. contain the two hymns, which attest the greatness of Moses as a poet, and chap. xxxiv. gives the history of his death. Now, any one who will carefully consider the nature of the contents of the Book of Deuteronomy as thus pointed out, will see that "the words of this law" would be the four first books of the Pentateuch; and though we thus divide them into four books, the Jews did not do so until late times. The Pentateuch with them was one undivided whole. For to what Moses left behind him was immediately added the Book of Deuteronomy, written equally by his hand, except the historical xxxi. and xxxiv. chapters, but not

Joshua probably wrote the account of the last days of Moses.

"The words of this law" were the first four books of the Pentateuch.

The Pentateuch with the Jews an undivided whole.

strictly forming the Book of the Law, though many legal enactments are recapitulated in it. And the assertion that Moses himself wrote the law, and commanded his autograph copy to be laid up by the side of the ark, is made not by Moses himself, which would have been contrary to the customs of those primitive times, but by those who obediently carried out his command, and who as being charged with this duty would also gather his final addresses together, and complete the record by the history of their leader's last acts and of his death.

The antecedent assumption of the Mosaic authorship founded on the nature of its contents.

Having thus cleared the ground, we will next proceed to show that the antecedent presumption is in favour of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, not merely because of the tradition in its favour, and the external authority which might be adduced, but because of the nature of its contents. No book of the Bible covers so vast a field, either of time or of country. Confining ourselves to the latter point, we find the cradle of the human race placed in Babylonia, and at length we are able to compare the Biblical narrative with legends and tales, wonderfully preserved there unto this day. From the regions watered by the Euphrates we next are led with Abraham to the uplands of Canaan, whence the history takes us into Egypt at repeated intervals; and finally, we accompany the Israelites during a wandering of forty years in

the deserts of Sinai. It is a peculiar privilege of the days in which we live that our knowledge of all these countries is greatly increased by the decypherment of writings of vast antiquity, which had long remained hidden from human sight under the mounds which mark the sites of the ruined cities of Assyria. We are no longer dependent upon stories and traditions narrated to us by Greek travellers in Babylonia of a comparatively late date, but have in our museums, inscribed on cylinders and tablets of clay, the literature of the nations who of old inhabited these ancient lands. Some of these documents are said by Mr. Sayce *(Chaldean Genesis,* p. 24), to be far older than the time of Abraham; while in addition to them we possess translations of writings in the language of Accad (Gen. x. 10), made at a time when that town was passing out of memory, for the libraries of Assyrian kings, and which, even in this form, are themselves anterior to the Christian era by six or seven centuries.

Great increase of our knowledge of all the countries referred to in the Pentateuch.

These writings are, as a rule, childishly polytheistic and full of fable, but it is remarkable that they cover much the same ground as the earlier narratives of the Book of Genesis. Thus we have legends of Creation, of the Paradise, of the Tree of Life, of the Flood, of the Tower of Babel; and moreover, from Senkereh, the ancient Larsa, there has been brought and deposited in the British

The generally childish and fabulous character of the writings that have been discovered.

Museum a historical cylinder, supposed to belong to the eighteenth century before our era, in which are detailed the exploits of Kudur-Mabuk, a king of Elam, who carried his conquering arms not only into Babylonia but into Palestine, and to the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. By this document extraordinary light is thrown upon the history of Chedorlaomer (Kudur-Lagomar), who was apparently his successor, and who invaded Canaan to replace upon the nations there the yoke of Kudur-Mabuk. But the interest for us lies in the close parallelism between these old Chaldean legends and the first few chapters of the Book of Genesis. Now it was not until very late in their history that the Jews, by the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar, were once again brought into contact with the Chaldeans; and naturally we find in the writings of Ezekiel, the prophet of that period, an intimate acquaintance with Chaldean symbolism. But though the assertion has been made, that the code of law found in the Book of Leviticus belongs to the time of Ezekiel, it would be futile to attempt to bring down the age of the Pentateuch generally to this date. For the Chaldean legends, long before this had become hopelessly debased, and it would have been impossible to divest them of their mythology, and frame from them a narrative so grand, and even scientifically correct, though written in popular language, as the history

The close parallelism between the old Chaldean legends and the first chapters of Genesis.

The legends utterly debased before the Jews were again brought into connection with Chaldea.

of creation. We know, moreover, that confessedly most of the Pentateuch then existed much as we have it now; and considerable portions of the Book of Ezekiel are occupied with enactments which were either to explain or to supersede the Levitical law. Especially he described a new arrangement of the territory of Palestine, in which the Levites were no longer to be left without their share of the country; but while the priests had the land immediately round the temple, they were to have a broad region lying between the portion of the priests and that assigned to the tribe of Judah. But if the attempt would be hopeless to assign these early chapters of Genesis to the time of Ezekiel, there is absolutely no one but Moses who could have penned them.

Most of the Pentateuch then existed as we have it now.

Only Moses could have penned them.

For they are an integral portion of a consistent narrative of which the one object is the growth of the family of Abraham into a nation. The history finds Abraham dwelling among these Chaldeans, and himself of their stock. The primary purpose of the previous chapters is to give us Abraham's genealogy, and to show that he was the direct representative of Shem, and through him of Seth, the son of Adam, to whom belonged by divine decree the right of primogeniture. And with this right of primogeniture certain promises are bound up, which explain the reason of Abraham's call, and the purpose for which his descendants were

The purpose of the narrative.

to be formed into a separate people. It was perfectly natural, and even necessary, for Moses, when tracing Israel's origin and growth, to carry the history of their progenitor back to the very first. But who besides Moses could have traced it through a series of what had degenerated into Chaldean fables? Nor are there any remains of this genealogy in the legends as we now find them.

The Mosaic authorship explains everything.

Accept the Mosaic authorship, and all falls easily into its place. Abraham, the highest born of the whole Semitic stock, is described as dwelling at Ur, a large and wealthy town, the chief seaport upon the Persian Gulf, though now left far inland by the deposit of the silt brought down by the Euphrates from the highlands of Armenia. The place was originally peopled by the Accadians, a race descended from Japheth, and who are proved by the large remains of their literature to have been a wealthy, learned, and highly civilized people. The cuneiform method of writing seems to have been their invention, and clay their ordinary, though by no means their only writing material. Papyrus[1] was used by them at a very early date; and so common was the use of writing, that all the ordinary transactions of business were carefully recorded, and numerous tablets in our museums refer to matters of the most insignificant kind.

But when Abraham appears they had already

[1] *Journal Bibl. Archæol.* i. 144; iii. 430.

been conquered by the Chaldeans, a Semitic race of the same family as Abraham himself. And in process of time, not only Abraham, but his father Terah, and a powerful section of the clan of Eber, leave Ur, and settle in Haran, a town on the ordinary route to Palestine, and through which Kudur-Mabuk must have passed on his way to the conquest of that country, at the very time when Terah and his sons were dwelling there. Now, why did Terah and his family leave Ur? The reason distinctly was a religious one,[1] and no reasonable doubt can be cast upon the assertion that the difference between Abraham and the Chaldees lay in his being a worshipper of one God, while they worshipped many. Nor can we find any explanation of the monotheism of Abraham and his clan so simple and reasonable as that given by his possession of such histories as those contained in the earlier chapters of Genesis. The sublime narrative of creation, setting it forth as the work of one God, who commanded only and it was done, would alone have been a powerful preservative against the belief in a motley crowd of deities. Even in the Babylonian legend of creation, we still find traces of this grand conception in the statement that there was a time when the gods[2] had not been called into being. This sounds very much like a faint echo of the

The migration of Terah and his clan.

The reason of it religious.

The explanation of the monotheism of Abraham to be found in his possession of the primitive histories.

[1] Gen. xii. 1; xv. 7.

[2] *Chald. Gen.*, p. 56.

opening words of Genesis, that "in the beginning God made the heaven and the earth." Abraham, as the direct representative of Shem, would be the natural depository of whatever knowledge God had given either to the antediluvian or the patriarchal world. And this knowledge, carefully guarded and preserved as a most precious deposit, would account for the pure faith of Abraham and the family to which he belonged. These documents Moses would use under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit; but it would have been impossible for any one, without miraculous intervention, to pen narratives which run so exactly alongside the Chaldean legends, unless he had possessed the records, of which the legends are the debased form.

Abraham the natural depository of the Divinely given knowledge of the antediluvian and patriarchal world.

The documents possessed and used by Moses.

It is evident from their literature that not only the Accadians, but their Chaldean conquerors at Ur, were idolaters, though probably retaining vestiges of a purer creed. And Abraham[1] and his brethren would certainly endeavour to propagate—at all events among their Semitic kinsmen—the nobler faith which they had inherited. Nor would such an effort be altogether without success. But we gather from the departure of Terah and his family from wealthy and civilized Ur to a place so exposed to danger as Haran, that finally it became impossible for them to continue there. They could not join in idolatrous worship; probably,

The pure faith propagated by Abraham and his brethren.

Residence at Haran became impossible by reason of prevailing idolatry.

[1] Compare Gen. xviii. 19; xxxv. 2, 3.

too, they were teachers and active propagators of tenets destructive of the religions around them. There were attractions, moreover, for their own dependents, and even for themselves (Josh. xxiv. 2), in the rites and ceremonies, the feasts and holy days of the people among whom they dwelt. And so God called them away to regions where the purity of their faith would no longer be imperilled.

The Divine call to leave it.

In the departure of Terah from Ur, we have the dividing line of these legends. Abraham carried them with him first to Haran, and then to Canaan in their pure form. At Ur and in Chaldea they degenerated into puerile fables. Inscribed even on tablets of clay they would not be cumbrous to carry. Abraham was at the head of a powerful clan, and carried large wealth with him. While at Haran Terah and his family seem to have engaged in trade,[1] for which the place was admirably suited, and at Ur they had lived among a people too advanced in civilization for them to be indifferent to knowledge. But we have seen that though clay was the cheapest, yet that other more costly writing materials were in use, and Abraham, when abandoning so much for religious reasons, would carry with him as a prized possession the records of his faith, especially as they belonged to him as being, in the direct line of primogeniture, the representative of the priesthood of Shem.

The migration from Ur the dividing line of the traditions.

The pure form retained by Abraham.

At Ur they degenerated into fables.

[1] Gen. xii. 5.

The preservation of the records.

Their preservation from this time to the age of Moses was a matter of course, and he would make such use of them and of other patriarchal records as was dictated to him by the guidance of the Spirit of God. But their continued preservation until late times would be most improbable. Even if carried into the wilderness and laid up with the ark at Shiloh, they would scarcely have escaped destruction at the hands of the Philistines. Samuel would no doubt save all that he could. Many a record of former days was probably rescued by him; but even if he had rescued these old memorials, that which next follows agrees with the authorship of Moses, but negatives the idea that Samuel could have compiled the Pentateuch.

Abraham's wandering life, and his life in Egypt.

For we are next brought into contact partly with the life of a wandering Arab sheik and partly with Egypt. Now, the customs of life change so little in the East that the ideas and principles which underlie the conduct of Abraham and his successors are much the same as those of an Arab tribe in the present day. They are described with the most thorough fidelity, but it is the exact knowledge of Egypt which claims Moses as the writer of those portions of Genesis and Exodus which belong to that country. Moses in the Egyptian narratives given in the Book of Genesis still seems to have had written records before him. The whole of Genesis is arranged in a series of "books of generations,"

The descriptions of life and the underlying principles of Abraham's conduct thoroughly faithful and true to Eastern life to-day.

The arrangement of Genesis.

or genealogical narratives. Moses, of course, would have possessed the materials for these histories, but again their preservation to later times would have been difficult; and we can see no reason why Genesis should have been thus arranged in a series of genealogies except the fact that when Moses became the ruler of Israel, all the archives of the race came to be at his disposal. Oriental nations generally attach great importance to genealogies, and carefully record them; but there was more than mere tribal pride that required that Israel's genealogy should be faithfully preserved. Everywhere in the Bible there is the most careful preparation for the genealogy of our Lord.

The only sufficient reason for it.

Nothing, too, was more natural than that the man who had been the head and leader in Israel's exodus from Egypt, and whose office it was to form it into a nation, should give its history from the very first. He was brought up in all the learning of the Egyptians, he lived in a great crisis of his people's history, he had himself been the prime mover in noble deeds, and whatever archives and documents existed belonging to the race, would be in his custody. He had abundant leisure in the wilderness at Kadesh, and we can well imagine the interest with which he would study the wonderful records of the past. No man had such a call upon him to show who Israel was, and what were the covenant rights of the race, as the

Natural that Moses, the leader of the Exodus, should write the history.

No one had such a call to write the history as Moses.

hero who was leading them to Canaan to win those rights by the sword. He had to justify their war of conquest; he had to ennoble the people, and teach them who and what they were; and he had to make them worthy to fulfil the high destiny of a family in whom, as he taught, all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. Never had man such a call upon him to write the origins of a nation as Moses, and no one can read the Pentateuch without feeling that Israel's mission and holy calling, and the blessing contained within it for all mankind were motives strong and urgent and all-constraining and ever-present in the writer's mind.

Moses the actor as well as writer, from Exodus to the end of the Pentateuch.

Egypt and the Desert of Sinai.

From Exodus to the end of the Pentateuch we have done with generations, family records and patriarchal memorials, and Moses is the great actor, and as we believe the narrator also. And here we have two regions, Egypt and the Desert of Sinai. Now, not only is all that is told us of Egypt confirmed by our largely-increased knowledge of the country, but there are special points strongly confirmatory of the view that the writer of the Exodus had a personal acquaintance with the land. Thus the plagues of Egypt are found generally to be based upon natural phenomena, happening usually at long intervals, but which came with intensified force one after another, blow upon blow, until Egypt was crushed by them; while finally the

Points confirmatory of the Mosaic authorship.

smiting of the firstborn was a proof that they were no mere natural phenomena, but the manifestation of God's presence in judgment. But this knowledge of Egypt and Egyptian customs and phenomena is now generally granted. There are indeed still points where there is room for rival theories. There is not an absolute agreement as to the Pharaoh in whose days Joseph was taken down into Egypt, nor as to the route followed by Israel at its departure. But the limits of diversity of opinion are being rapidly narrowed; and as regards the route, the difficulty mainly arises from the changes in the land wrought naturally during the space of three thousand years.

The writer's knowledge of Egypt generally granted

Divergence of view on some points.

As regards the wilderness of Sinai the case used to be different. It was supposed that the history of the wanderings of Israel there was at variance with the topography of the country. Even Professor Robertson Smith says that "the Pentateuch displays an exact topographical knowledge of Canaan, but by no means so exact a knowledge of the wilderness of the wandering."[1] The testimony of the late Professor Palmer does not confirm this verdict. Famous for his knowledge of Arabic, which he spoke like a native, and of which language he was the Lord Almoner's Reader at Cambridge, he had traversed the country in every direction, and finally had taken part in

The difference between Professor Robertson Smith and Professor Palmer, touching the knowledge displayed in the Pentateuch of the Wilderness of the Wandering.

[1] *Old Test. in Jewish Church*, p. 324.

Professor Palmer's testimony.

the systematic labours of the Ordnance Survey of Sinai and the Palestine Exploration Fund. Of the general results of that survey, he says that "the investigators of the Sinai Expedition materially confirm and elucidate the history of the Exodus."[1] So also as regards Sinai, of which Professor Robertson Smith states that "geographers are unable to assign its site with certainty, because the narrative has none of that topographical colour which the story of an eye-witness is sure to possess,"[2] Mr. Palmer affirms just the reverse. "We have seen," he says, "how in the case of Sinai physical facts accord with the inspired account;" and again, "We are able not only to trace out a route by which the children of Israel could have journeyed, but also to show its identity with that so concisely but graphically laid down in the Pentateuch. We have seen, moreover, that it leads to a mountain answering in every respect to the description of the Mountain of the Law: the chain of topographical evidence is complete, and the maps and sections may henceforth be confidently left to tell their own tale."[3] Finally, at the end of the second volume, he says, "The truth of the narrative of the Exodus has been of late years continually called in question; but I have purposely abstained from discussing any of these

[1] *The Desert of the Exodus*, i. 279.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 277, 279.

objections because I believe that geographical facts form the best answer to them all."[1]

Details may be criticised, but the combination of the various lines of evidence forms a strong argument for the Mosaic authorship.

Now, if we put all these things together, they form a strong argument for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and they cover pretty nearly every part of it. It is easy to criticise and contradict details, but the combination of topographical correctness, and exact knowledge of manners and customs in four distinct and dissimilar regions forms a very convincing argument. And what deserves careful attention is, that the argument is strengthened by each increase of our knowledge. The careful survey of the wilderness of the wandering, carried out by Government officials would have disproved the Mosaic account if it had been a late production, written anywhere else than on the spot. So our increased knowledge of Egypt would have detected numerous glaring inaccuracies had the history been written by one dwelling in Palestine. Finally, the discovery of these Chaldean legends seems decisive as to the fact that the author must have had Chaldean materials before him, and apparently at a time when they were not debased and degraded by the introduction of the puerile polytheism which now forms so large a portion of their contents. Now, supposing that some nameless person could have

[1] *The Desert of the Exodus*, Vol. II., 530.

Only Moses could have traced the origin and growth of Israel from Paradise on the Euphrates to the conquest of Canaan.

accomplished one portion of the task, who but Moses could have traced the origin and growth of Israel as a nation from the Paradise of Adam on the Euphrates to the moment when it was finally mustered for the conquest of Canaan? Moses did combine the varied materials and knowledge necessary for the work, but besides Moses there is no one.

The "Higher Criticism" on the Pentateuch.

Its conclusions concerning the three codes.

But it is confidently put forward as a result proved by the "Higher Criticism," that the Pentateuch is an aggregation of legislation of various periods, all called Mosaic because springing from Mosaic origins: and especially that three codes may be separated from the rest, namely, that in Exodus xx. to xxiv., briefly recapitulated in chapter xxxiv; that in Deut. xii. to xxvi; and that in Lev. xvii. to xxvi., with scattered additions throughout the Books of Leviticus and Numbers. The first is often styled the Covenant-code, and is assigned to the age of Jehoshaphat; the second, or Deuteronomic, also called the people's code, is ascribed to the age of Josiah; while the Levitical or priestly code, is supposed to be later in date than the prophecy of Ezekiel, which is regarded as preparatory to it, and to have been incorporated in the Pentateuch about the time of the return from exile.

In opposition to these startling conclusions we venture to think that there is still abundant reason

to believe in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch as a whole. In a book so ancient there may be not only interpolations, but additions made to complete genealogies, and to bring the information down to later times. Notes also, and additions placed in the margin, may have been inserted by copyists in the text. We cannot suppose that a book of such immense antiquity has undergone none of those perils to which we know that the manuscripts of the New Testament have been subjected. But we also know that we have the text substantially such as it was in the days of Ezra, and we hope now to give reasons for believing that it is not an aggregation of legislation of various dates, but was written during the wanderings in the wilderness.

Despite these conclusions there is abundant reason for believing in the Mosaic authorship.

Interpolations, etc.

We grant that it has never been arranged in an orderly manner, but this is in favour of the Mosaic authorship. In Palestine the national code would have been digested and made uniform. The Pentateuch, after the close of the narrative of the Exodus, seems to have been written from time to time as occasion called for it. Inscribed on separate skins the various portions were independent of one another, and often a considerable time elapsed between the writing of one portion and that of another. Nearly forty years passed between the writing of the covenant-code in Exodus and the popular-code in Deuteronomy, and the purpose of

The non-arrangement of the material in an orderly manner an argument for the Mosaic authorship.

The difficulty at the root of the critical theories.

the two was entirely distinct. But we must grant the difficulty which is at the root of these theories, namely, that the Mosaic legislation never was put thoroughly into practice, either in the times of the Judges or of the Kings. For this we shall give reasons hereafter; but in spite of this it has been shown in a convincing manner that the Levitical law underlies the whole of the Old Testament.[1] And this argument is made even the more convincing by the fact that it is never obtruded upon our attention, nor are continual appeals made to it. The Jewish nation did not yield a ready obedience to the Mosaic institutions, and the charge brought by the law-giver against the people, that they had been rebellious and of a stiff-neck during his lifetime, proved, as he expected, true after his death (Deut. xxxi. 27).

The law not carried out in its entirety till the time of Ezra.

Until the time of Ezra there never was a hearty attempt to carry out the law in its entirety, though David did much towards popularizing some of its enactments, while in others he acted independently of it.

The reason of this fact.

The reason of this is not far to seek. It was caused not so much by the absence of manuscripts —for this want is atoned for in many nations by the cultivation of the memory—as by the political

[1] See Hengstenberg on *Genuineness of Pentateuch*, translated by Ryland. Clark, Edinburgh, 1847. Bishop Browne's *Speaker's Commentary*, Introduction to Pentateuch, etc.

constitution of the Israelites. The conquered land was divided among twelve of the tribes, which were left each to manage for itself. The only attempt made to bind them together by any form of federation was the command that at the three great festivals they should go to worship at the place where the ark was deposited (Exod. xxiii. 17). Now, as even in the time of Samuel, the great restorer of Israel, the ark was left almost unnoticed at Kirjath-Jearim for twenty years (1 Sam. vii. 2), it is plain that few, except perhaps Levites, had attached much importance to this ordinance. Each tribe lived independently of the rest, and the natural result was that state of anarchy (Judg. xxi. 25) described in the Book of Judges, during which the people were struggling for very existence; and in no case was the yoke of an invader cast off by the combination of the whole race. It was always a local effort, led by a local patriot, with the aid of two or three tribes at most, which set the suffering district free from foreign oppression.

The political constitution of the Israelites.

Another very important consideration must be added. Throughout the country a large number of the original inhabitants of the land remained (Judges ii. 2, 3), and apparently occupied posts of vantage, like the Jebusites, who still retained the stronghold of Zion (2 Sam. v. 7), until David's time. Besides these the Israelites were accompanied by a "mixed multitude," or rabble of strangers and

The presence of many of the original inhabitants of the land.

The "mixed multitude" in Israel.

foreigners (Exod. xii. 38), and the mass of the people were themselves debased by the slavery which they had endured in Egypt. In this we find the explanation of the fact that most of the superstitions and the local worships lived on in spite of the Mosaic law. Even the Christian church was content to adopt a number of heathen customs, and endeavour to give a purer colour to them, to the real loss of holiness and spirituality. Just the same thing went on in Israel (Judges ii. 12, 13), only with more determined course, because the resisting forces were weaker. And hence local sanctuaries, sacrifices at places unauthorized by the law, worship at high places, and other similar customs were for many centuries winked at. The state of the people was such that even good men were content to try to graft a purer worship upon these old Canaanite practices than entirely abolish them. And when, after the days of Joshua and the elders who survived him, a lax generation grew up, and the tribe of Ephraim, in whose territory the ark was deposited, became unpopular because of its overbearing ways, each tribe was sure to prefer a local place of worship to one not merely remote but uncongenial to its members.

The survival of local superstitions and worships.

Local sanctuaries, high places, etc., winked at.

Disintegration of Israel after the days of Joshua and the elders who survived him.

The inevitable result of this disintegration of Israel was the degradation of the people. Slowly, but surely, they sank down from the state of civilization which had existed in the time of

The consequent degradation of the people.

Joshua, until literature ceased, and the art of writing became a mystery known only at Shiloh. The priests and Levites continued their official duties by rote, offering the sacrifices as they had seen them offered by their fathers. But where life is a daily struggle for existence, knowledge and refinement soon pass away. The Israelites during this period were like the dwellers in the backwoods of America, and would retain no more knowledge of their religion than the emigrants retain of the special doctrines of Christianity. There was still a strong element of piety among them, and of trust in Jehovah, but all knowledge of the enactments of their law was fast dying out.

The disjointed condition contrary to the purpose of Moses.

The provision made by Moses in the Levitical institution for the maintenance of religion and the preservation of unity.

Now, we find in the Pentateuch that Moses had not intended to leave the nation in this disjointed condition. On the contrary, he had made a very remarkable provision for the maintenance of its religion, and the preservation thereby of its unity. The tribe to which he himself belonged, and which was consequently then the most favoured tribe, instead of being placed in a commanding position, as was the case with Ephraim, was dispersed throughout the land. It had no separate territory, no tribal government, and was even made dependent upon the good will of the other tribes; for there was no legal method of enforcing payment of tithes and offerings; and when Jeroboam wanted to get rid of the Levites, and took very

summary measures for depriving them of their exclusive privileges, the nation generally acquiesced (1 Kings xii. 16–33). Even Moses, while requiring that the Levites should be regarded everywhere as a resident magistracy, yet foresaw their probable poverty (Deut. xxi. 5, and xiv. 27, 29). Nevertheless, though, politically and as regards property, their position was one of manifest inferiority, yet it is described as a reward (Exod. xxxii. 26–29). The few towns given them were mere homesteads, and insufficient for their maintenance. They were too scattered to wield any physical power, or maintain themselves by war. Yet, if Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, and his laws inspired from above, the position of the Levites was most grand and honourable. For it was one of high social rank and great religious importance. Vulgar minds prefer material advantages. Those accorded by Moses to his tribesmen were moral and religious, and as we read the words of his blessing in Deut. xxxiii. 8–11, we feel that he regarded their position himself as one of exceptional privilege.

The position of the tribe of Levi one of political inferiority but of high religious privilege and importance.

But let us leave Moses out of the question, because in reasoning we must assume nothing, and consider facts which cannot fairly be denied. Confining ourselves therefore to the Levites, we find that their males are represented as amounting to twenty-two thousand. They were thus far fewer

The number of males among the Levites represented as smaller than in other tribes.

in number than any of the other tribes, but for this there is a very probable explanation. In every other case the males "from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war," were counted, and thus it would include all slaves and dependents who were circumcised, according to the rule given in Gen. xiv. 14; xvii. 12, and who would form a considerable proportion of the retinue of the great landowners. We even find whole clans not of Israelitish blood incorporated into other tribes: thus Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, seems to have been an Edomite; but was counted with all his people as the adopted descendant of Hezron. Such additions must largely have swelled the numbers of other tribes; but of the Levites only those were counted who were eligible to "keep the charge of the sanctuary;" and as the stern command was given to put to death "the stranger that cometh nigh" (Num. iii. 38), it plainly follows that only such Levites as were members of the tribe by right of birth were included in the numbering. Very probably the descendants of those who formed the household of Levi when he went down into Egypt would be counted, and all who were formally members of the tribe; but none who were only dependents, or who had lately joined themselves to their number.

Explanation of this fact.

Foreign elements in other tribes

Only the Levites eligible for the charge of the sanctuary counted.

We find, therefore, a difference represented as already existing in the status of the Levites at the

The different status of the Levites existed two years after the exodus.

numbering of the tribes at the beginning of the second year after the exodus from Egypt. And subsequently, upon the conquest of Canaan, this difference is perpetuated, and they are excluded from all share in the conquered lands. We find, moreover, that this exclusion, so fatal to their political influence, and their tribal independence, is represented as a high privilege (Exod. xxxii. 29) granted for devotion to Jehovah's service; though originally, and most correctly, if we regard only their temporal position, it is described as a punishment (Gen. xlix. 7). How, then, is this to be explained? I can see no other answer than that the Levitical law in its main particulars was enacted at the very beginning of the long wandering in the wilderness, and seemed so securely established, and held so high a place in the estimation of the people, that it was regarded as an enviable position to be its ministers. The Levites were parting with the substance. They were content to go without lands, were forfeiting their political importance, abandoning their right of self-government, were making themselves powerless in war, and accepting instead a life of dependence upon gifts and offerings. Not only must the religious feeling have been uppermost in their minds, but they must have been assured of the firm attachment of the other tribes to the Mosaic institutions before it would have been possible for them to commit such an act of

The Levitical law must have been enacted at the beginning of the wanderings in the wilderness.

Religious feeling and confidence in the loyalty of the other tribes must have actuated them.

self-abnegation. They must have felt sure that the visits thrice in each year to the place wherever the ark was set up (Exodus xxxiv. 23) would be made, and the offerings duly brought, or they would not have abandoned so much to take in its stead so shadowy an endowment.

The form of government selected to be set up in Palestine.

Moses must often have thought over the vital question, of what would be the best form of government for the people when established in Palestine. The form he actually selected, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, was one that made piety and religion essential for its maintenance, while he evidently regarded with dislike the kingly form, which then almost universally prevailed. Probably he had seen in Egypt reasons enough for his aversion, and had suffered deeply in person. He had seen, too, there all those abuses of despotic power which he describes so graphically, and which some critics suppose refer to the practices of Solomon's court, as if that king did more than imitate Egyptian practices. And yet he must have been aware that monarchy was the political constitution which would best ensure the independence of the people, and give them strength for war. For it alone would combine the scattered forces of the tribes, and compel them to act in concert. Deliberately he put this aside, with the feeling nevertheless that the people sooner or later would demand it. What he chose was what he thought would conduce most

The kingly form set aside.

to the moral and religious advancement of Israel. Probably he had counted too largely upon the influence which the Levites would exercise; but this, even when supplemented by that of the prophets, who certainly did not fail in activity or zeal, proved politically insufficient. But the distrust of kings entertained by Moses was fully justified. Jeroboam, as we have seen, swept the Levites away. Even Saul, the first king, made the race of Aaron feel his power; and though David and most of his descendants were friendly to priests and Levites, yet they never attempted to carry out the law in all its enactments. Many of them even disliked it, and Manasseh did his best to uproot it. The reason of this no doubt was that the law of Moses made the priest with the Urim and Thummim superior to the king; and many of the early prophets actually compelled the kings to obey them. The intention of Moses had apparently been to make the race of Aaron the real rulers of the people, with the Levites as their ministers. Their influence was to be mainly moral, and unhappily there was a want of means of making that influence sufficiently felt. The occasional visit to the central seat of the ark was not enough; nor do the Levites seem to have realized the importance of their duties. Samuel added the prophetic schools, but they too were not enough. Finally, the synagogue was formed; and when a place of worship was provided

Distrust of kings justified.

Want of means to make the Levitical influence adequately felt.

in every town and village, and the Scriptures read there every Sabbath day, Israel became true to its law, and the times of ignorance and rebellion passed away. Unhappily, with the mass of the people, formalism then took the place of the heathenism too common before; while the Sadducees retained the old indifference to all that was best in the Mosaic law.

Supplementary institutions.

The spread of formalism.

Alike the patriotism, the self-denial, and the purposes sought by Moses are intelligible, if he were a real man, but the history is most improbable if he were a mythical hero. He might have made his own son his successor in the chieftainship: as a matter of fact he passes him by, and chooses instead Joshua, a young noble of the race of Ephraim. On the conquest of Canaan, Joshua received large landed estates, but for the sons of Moses there was nothing more than their share of the Levitical offerings. Even the headship of the tribe of Levi belonged to Aaron, the elder brother of Moses; and upon him and his descendants the high priesthood was conferred. They did consequently hold a grand position; but as for Moses himself, in 1 Chron. vi., after he has been barely mentioned, his race entirely drops out of the genealogy, while the family of Aaron is carefully described. All this is full of meaning typically, and finds its explanation in New Testament truths; but to these I must not refer, as they lie outside

The conduct of Moses unintelligible if he were a mythical hero.

Typical significance.

The priesthood permanent and hereditary, but not the office held by Moses.

the argument. I only point out the facts as given in the narrative, that while Moses conferred the spiritual power on Aaron, and provided for its permanent continuance, he took diligent care that his own kingly office (Deut. xxxiii. 5), should neither be permanent nor hereditary. Yet hereditary rights were not unknown. The princes of each tribe were hereditary. The heads of the "fathers' houses" were hereditary, and in times of emergency their power became considerable. We gather from the words of Gideon (Judges vi. 15) that it was to them that the people looked for help. Yet Moses had impressed upon the nation so deep a dislike of the despotic power of kings, that Gideon resolutely refused that office when pressed upon him by the people after the defeat of Midian (Judges viii. 22, 23), and when already it was becoming manifest that the nation did need some central authority to bind it together and give it security against foreign aggression.

A dislike of despotic kingly power impressed upon the people.

The purpose of Moses with reference to the national life in Canaan.

The purpose which Moses was led to form was that after the conquest of Canaan the people should live in a state of patriarchal simplicity and of peace. He deliberately refused them that which would have made them strong for war; and Joshua, after the conclusion of the war, was to be merely a great landowner. There was to be no tyranny or despotism at home, and no aggression upon the neighbouring people. The theocracy is the most

perfect of ideal governments, but it requires a high state of morality in the people, great faith in God, and the maintenance of a manly spirit of patriotism throughout the nation. It was the want of this which caused its failure. There was not much feeling of fellowship among the tribes. Judah, which was to have been Israel's mainstay in war, kept aloof. Ephraim, the tribe which held the central position, while claiming the leadership, did little for the rest, and was disliked by them. Nowhere was there any strong sense of allegiance to Jehovah as their king; and we do not find that the Levites were either particularly active or successful in keeping alive in the hearts of the people a warm love for the Mosaic law. And yet, if in its external fortunes the political constitution of Moses was not successful; if Israel's existence was a troubled one, with but few periods of golden sunshine, nevertheless it accomplished its higher and spiritual work. It produced a very heroic national life, and one ever struggling onwards. Had Israel enjoyed a larger degree of ease and prosperity and security, it would not have accomplished its work for God so well. No sooner even did it attain unto empire under David, than, after a short era of earthly glory, the Divine Providence rent it into two petty kingdoms. When built up again by the piety of Ezra and Nehemiah, the conquests of Alexander placed in its neighbourhood states too powerful

Why the theocracy failed.

The work it actually accomplished.

Gentile supremacy.

for it to be able to cope with them. The empire of the world was given to Assyrians and Persians, Greeks and Romans. The Jews were chosen for an entirely different purpose; and to this very day they set before us the same phenomenon that has ever marked their history, of a continued and permanent existence under temporal circumstances of a most adverse character. And we believe that the law of Moses was given for the sake of Israel's spiritual development, and that it fully accomplished its divine purpose.

The phenomena of Jewish history.

The purpose of the Mosaic law.

We have examined, then, the facts as given in the history, and also inquired into the conduct, the purpose, and views of Moses in the establishment of the Levitical law, and have seen what were the influences to which he trusted for its maintenance. And we venture to say that at no time, except when they were just entering upon the conquest of Canaan, would such a state of things as we have described have been possible. We find in the Pentateuch a striving after an ideal perfection, and the expectation that, after taking possession of the promised land, the people would lead a peaceful life, blessed with a pure morality, high spiritual privileges, security from without, and self-restraint and respect for the rights of others at home. But the sole means used by the lawgiver are moral. Dispersed among the tribes, the Levites are to maintain among them the living power of religion; and for

Conclusion from the facts surveyed.

Features of the natural life described in the Pentateuch.

its protection Israel must trust in God, who, if it is faithful to His service, will use supernatural means in its behalf. We find Isaiah picturing again such an ideal of earthly perfection in chaps. xi. and lxv. There is the same longing, the same aspiration in the Christian Church. It would be untrue to say that Christianity has failed because the general state of Christendom falls so far short of the ideal proposed. Equally untrue is it to speak of the Mosaic law as a failure, because it too never realized its high expectations. Then as now it was a high privilege for God's people to have a noble ideal of faith and duty set before them, and in all the worthier members of the nation there was a continual striving to reach the high standard proposed. The difference between the two dispensations is, that Christianity, being intended for all mankind, enacts great principles, which each country is to embody in laws and institutions, according to the requirements of time and place. The Levitical law was for one small nation in one small corner of the world, and intended to last only until another prophet should come invested with powers similar to those of Moses (Deut. xviii. 15). In its higher object the Mosaic law was not unsuccessful. The ideal state of things which it proposed was rather a goal after which the nation was to struggle, than a thing capable of actual realization. The great objects, as we Christians

Similar features in the Christian Church.

Differences between Christianity and the Mosaic law.

The higher object of the Mosaic law accomplished.

The threefold object of the Levitical law.

believe, of the Levitical law were, first of all, to prepare the way for the advent of the Messiah; secondly, to keep alive in the hearts of Israel the expectation of His coming; and thirdly, to give proof of His nature and office now that He has come.

I mention this not as any part of the argument to those outside the faith, but because many who believe might be distressed on finding that Moses proposed the establishment of a state of things on earth which never came to pass. Had the objects of the Mosaic law been earthly, it would be hard to understand how their lawgiver could have left the Israelites without any provision for their security from external attack; or how he could have trusted to the distribution of the Levites into forty-eight towns, four in each tribe, for the maintenance of that high state of piety and morality which actually existed during the days of Joshua, and the elders who had been brought under Moses' personal influence. But this seems to me an unassailable proof that Moses was the author of the Levitical law; for when would such an arrangement have been possible except just at the time when the people were entering upon the conquest of Canaan?

The non-earthly objects of the Mosaic law proved by the Levitical arrangements.

Only Moses could have been the author of the law.

Gainsayers cannot say that this description was an invention of the priests and Levites after the return from Babylon, to bolster up their excessive claims. For if those claims had not had a very

It could not have been a post-exilian invention.

solid foundation, the descendants of David would not have abstained so meekly from all attempts to re-establish the royal power. But besides this, we find that the Samaritans, who were very hostile to the Jews on many religious points, accepted the Pentateuch as their national law. The Samaritan characters are the old letters used by the Jews before the captivity, and resemble those found on the Moabite stone, and in the inscription lately discovered in the subterranean channel cut through the rock to convey the waters of Siloam into Jerusalem. We find them still used on the coins of the Asmonean princes of Judea, and it is probable that it was only gradually that the present Hebrew alphabet took the place of the old style of writing, and that the manuscripts used by Ezra were written in the same characters as have been retained in the Samaritan Pentateuch to this day. Now, not only did the Samaritans acknowledge the authority of the Pentateuch, but they attest its antiquity by the fact that its language was so obsolete that they could not understand it, and that consequently they were obliged to have a translation of it made for common use.

Acceptance of the Pentateuch by the Samaritans.

The Samaritan translation, a proof of its antiquity.

The same was the case with the Jews (Neh. viii. 8); for at Babylon they had learned to speak an Aramaic dialect, already in general use in Palestine before; for Jeremiah often employs it. Parts of Ezra and Daniel are in this tongue, and

among the Ten Tribes it seems to have generally prevailed, and must further have been strangely corrupted in Samaria by the admixture of the languages spoken by the motley tribes which the Assyrians planted in the land (2 Kings xvii. 24). It is a remarkable fact that Hebrew thus became virtually an obsolete language during the captivity, and that the Jews, in order to understand it, made for themselves a translation, called the Chaldee Targum or Paraphrase, and that the Samaritans likewise had a Targum of their own. Now, it is absolutely incredible that Jews and Samaritans should both alike have accepted as their national law a book written in an obsolete language, unless that book had come down to them from ancient times as one of acknowledged authority.

The Jews of the captivity required a translation.

The antiquity and acknowledged authority of the book proved by its acceptance by Jews and Samaritans.

The Samaritans did not accept any other book of the Old Testament as authoritative. It was therefore no common-place act, nor one done without discrimination. Moreover, the Pentateuch bore hardly upon them. The first priest of the temple on Mount Gerizim was a grandson of Eliashib, the high priest at Jerusalem, chased by Nehemiah from his office in the Jewish temple for marrying a daughter of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria (Neh. xiii. 28; Josephus *Antiq.* xi. 7, 2), in disobedience to the command given in Deut. vii. 3. Others had been expelled with him, and yet no one ventured to dispute the authority of

The authority of the book recognized by the Samaritans even when its decrees were executed against themselves.

the book, the decrees of which were being carried out so rigorously against themselves. We can account for this in no other way than by the fact that they found the Pentateuch in existence when they were compelled to settle in Samaria, and reverenced as their law by the old inhabitants of the land. It is utterly beyond belief that they should have accepted it from their rivals in Jerusalem. Yet in their land Jeroboam had stripped the Levites of their privileges, had admitted any one without distinction to the priesthood, and had gone so entirely counter to the Mosaic law that priests and Levites and even pious laymen had withdrawn from his dominions, and migrated to Judea, that they might worship according to their ancient faith (2 Chron. xi. 13–17).[1]

Now, had there been a succession of kings like Jeroboam, it would have been well-nigh impossible for the Pentateuch to have retained its authority in Israel. Gradually it would have been rooted out. Equally impossible would have been the

[1] The time when the Pentateuch was received by the people of Samaria as their national law is much discussed, and is by no means certain. See Nutt, *Samaritan Targum, with Introduction*. 1874. But the facts are admitted, that it was received by them as authoritative ; that it contains readings different from both the Hebrew and the Septuagint texts ; that it was translated into their patois, and fragments of their version are gradually accumulating in our libraries ; and that it bore so hardly upon the Samaritans and upon the first high priest of their temple on Mount Gerizim, that they would scarcely have accepted it had not its authority been incontestable.

Observance of many Mosaic precepts in the kingdom of Samaria referred to in the prophecies of Hosea, Joel, and Amos.

remarkable fact that in the short compass of the books of Hosea, Joel, and Amos, all of them prophets to the Ten Tribes, a very large number of minute precepts of the Mosaic law are incidentally referred to as then observed in the kingdom of Samaria.[1] But when we turn to the history we find all this explained. After the overthrow of priests and Levites in Israel, there was a remarkable outburst there of prophetic activity. Elijah, the most energetic of the prophets, even wrought an entire recovery in the national faith by his contest with Ahab on Mount Carmel (1 Kings xviii. 39), and in spite of that king's hostility to Jehovah, and the more bitter and persecuting hatred of Jezebel, brought back the Ten Tribes to their ancient creed. And as we find him in his last journey, before his translation, occupied in visiting the schools of the prophets, it is evident that he had called them again into existence; and the life of his successor Elisha was spent in fostering and tending them.

Elijah and Elisha.

Their influence.

So great was the influence of these men that they placed Jehu upon the throne; and though he did less than they desired, yet he and his dynasty gave at least a nominal allegiance to Jehovah. He did not overthrow the rival worship at Bethel and Dan, nor restore the Levites to their old place; but the prophets were free to exercise their

Its limits.

[1] For a list of such passages see the article on the Pentateuch in Smith's *Bible Dictionary*.

influence, and the Mosaic law was more or less the law of the land. It would probably have been very difficult to have re-established the Aaronic priesthood, and to have restored to the Levites their cities and lands. Even after the interval of a very few years, Charles II. made no attempt to give back to the heirs of those who had suffered for his father their forfeited estates. Nearly a century had passed away since Jeroboam drove the Levites from their homes, and other rights had grown valid in the meanwhile. But, as the writings of the three prophets attest, the Levitical law was observed; and in the schools of the prophets copies of the law would be made, and large portions of it learnt by heart by the scholars.

The Mosaic law partially established.

Really we learn a great deal from the history of Jehu and his successors; for they are condemned for allowing the continuance in the ten tribes of that state of things which had generally existed in earlier days. It must, indeed, be granted, that the ark at Jerusalem, and the service in the temple there, held a higher place in the national estimation than had been attached to the sanctuary at Shiloh; and the local sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan[1] were more directly rivals to it. Still there are many indica-

Improved state of matters under Jehu and his successors.

[1] The history of this sanctuary is very remarkable. The manner of its foundation is described again and again as a fact illustrating the utter lawlessness of the times (Judg. xvii. 6; xviii. 1); nevertheless we find that so great was the value

Prophetic expectations from Jehu only partially fulfilled.

tions that when the prophets placed Jehu on the throne, they had hoped for a more complete restoration of the Mosaic law than was actually effected. For Jehu succumbed to the old influences, and while forbidding the service of any God but Jehovah, yet did not feel himself strong enough to interfere with the popular manner of worship.

The history from Jeroboam to the fall of the northern kingdom proves the genuineness of the Mosaic law.

Thus the history of the times, from Jeroboam to the fall of the northern kingdom, forbids the belief that the Mosaic law could have been an invention or forgery of the period between the disruption of the kingdom and the exile in Babylon; for it was acknowledged in both portions of the divided kingdom as their national code, though in neither Israel nor Judah was it carried out in the spirit of loyal obedience. In Israel, the kings from Jeroboam to Ahab were its foes, yet it remained so strong in influence that upon it rested the mighty power exercised by the prophets. Subsequently, alike Samaritans and Jews attest its existence as a document of great antiquity at the period of the return from captivity; and it is not merely impro-

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attached to the presence of a Levite that the having one within the gates was regarded as a surety that Jehovah would grant the family prosperity. What makes the occurrence more remarkable is that this Levite was a descendant of Moses, the inserted *n* making the name Manasseh, being in the Hebrew written over the word (Judg. xviii. 30).

bable, but impossible, that they would either of them have accepted from the other a law which demanded of them an unconditional obedience, unless its claims were of the highest kind. When, then, we may ask, could it have been enacted, if not by Moses previously to the conquest of Canaan?

Any other date for the Pentateuch than the conquest of Canaan is impossible.

Certainly not in the times of the Judges. The state of things was then anarchical; and turbulence, foreign oppression, and internal weakness prevailed. Once indeed the tribes combined to destroy Benjamin, and that for a wrong done to a Levite; but the fact to be explained is that the Levites were left without possessions, and yet given a position regarded as one of great honour. No war or revolt could have accomplished so strange an arrangement. And when we come to the age of Samuel, we find him supplementing the institution of priests and Levites by an entirely fresh organization. He does not revive a central sanctuary, with the tabernacle and ark as the symbol of the Divine Presence, such as had existed at Shiloh in his own youthful days. On the contrary, he leaves the ark at the house of a private person, where it remained until the days of David (2 Sam. vi. 2). The reason of this is to be found in the preference given by Samuel to the moral as compared with the ritual teaching of the law (1 Sam. xv. 22). It was not then to the ark but to his schools that this great reformer looked for the

It could not have been written in the time of the Judges.

Nor in the time of Samuel.

Samuel preferred the moral to the ritual teaching of the law.

No preference given to the priests and Levites in the schools founded by Samuel.

restoration of Israel; and he gave no preference in them to priests and Levites. They were open to all, and wrought wonders in rapidly raising the mental and moral state of the people. But there

The schools not founded on the Pentateuch.

is nothing in the Pentateuch on which they are founded. That was the title-deed of the nation to Palestine, and contained an account of the institutions by which the national life was to be maintained: but Samuel's schools found in them no authorization, and nothing on which to ground

Their origin.

their existence. Probably they grew out of an attempt made by Samuel, to teach to a few young men lodged in booths in the Naioth, or meadows near his home at Ramah, the arts of reading and writing which he had himself learned at Shiloh. He had probably felt the need of young and active men to assist him in his undertakings, and began to train such as came to his hand. And the institu-

They met a want.

tion grew and filled up a great want; and there can be little doubt that to the schools of the

The preservation of the Old Testament Scriptures due to them.

prophets we owe the preservation of the Old Testament Scriptures. But Samuel never attempted to restore the Levitical law, nor to confine himself within its limits. He found the nation on the very verge of ruin (1 Sam. xiii. 19, 20); and while the ark was hidden away at Kirjath-Jearim, and the Philistines were the dominant power, he was labouring steadily to bring back the people to the worship of Jehovah; but his main object throughout was

the restoration of moral purity and personal holiness (*ibid.* xii. 14–25). As soon as they were ready to put away their Baalim and Ashtoreth (*ibid.* vii. 4), he openly threw off the Philistine yoke, and became the civil governor, acting as judge, especially in the central part, where the Benjamites dwelt. Saul completed the work of Israel's independence, and at first greatly honoured the priests of Aaron's line (*ibid.* xiv. 3). But neither by Samuel nor by Saul was any attempt made to establish the law of Moses thoroughly, though each did something towards its better observance. But had it been a forgery by Samuel or even a compilation from documents rescued from Shiloh, it would have borne more directly upon the circumstances of the time, and the attempt would have been made to carry it out more fully. This was not done; and we cannot see that either Samuel or Saul at any time possessed either the power, or had the wish to invest the Levites with exceptional privileges; or that the Levites would have given up their lands and tribal possessions and independence in order that they might be dispersed throughout the country, for the purpose of maintaining by moral influence, institutions lately invented. What Samuel really did was to supplement the influence of the Levites, which had proved insufficient to save the nation from decay, by a new organization of young men of any tribe, taught to

Samuel's main object the restoration of moral purity and personal holiness.

Had Samuel forged or compiled the Pentateuch it would have borne more directly on the times and been more fully carried out.

Samuel supplemented the influence of the Levites.

read the law and love it; but made even more earnest as regards its moral exactments than its ritual observances (1 Sam. xv. 22).

David could not have established the Levitical institutions.

David alone remains, a monarch undeniably of great power, and thoroughly in earnest in his love for the Mosaic law, and especially for that most important principle of having a central sanctuary which the people should regularly visit, and whither they should bring their offerings. Though not permitted to build the temple because of his constant wars, in which certainly he had violated the Mosaic ideal of Israel's national existence, he made great preparations for it, and especially he distributed the priests into their courses, and arranged the musical services of the sanctuary. Confessedly the position of priest and Levite was made by him one of great honour, and I could quite imagine men giving up their farms to hold such distinguished positions. What is inconceivable is that he should have taken a whole tribe, and that no trace should remain of such a revolutionary measure as the dispossessing them of their property to make them thus ministers of religion. Surely some geographical vestiges would remain to indicate their former location, and there would have been long discontent at the driving of the inhabitants away from forty-eight towns to give them to this tribe thus suddenly metamorphosed.

No geographical traces of his setting apart the tribe, as there could not fail to have been had he done it.

We find the influence of Samuel's schools on

the services of the sanctuary. For the sons of Jeduthun are said to "prophesy with a harp." So it is said that Asaph and others "prophesied according to the commandment of the king" (1 Chron. xxv. 2, 3), that is, played music. Samuel had made great use of religious music in his schools, and minstrelsy was hence called prophesying. David, therefore, would have found in the prophets men capable of playing with instruments, and already partly trained for his use; but we can see no possibility that a whole tribe accustomed to other occupations would have been fit for his purposes. The only feasible explanation is that they had from the days of Moses been set apart for God's service, and that the king submitted to institutions which he found in existence.

The influence of Samuel's schools traceable in David's action.

The Levites must have been set apart by Moses.

So also David distinguished the descendants of Aaron from the rest, though the distinction between priest and Levite is said by the higher criticism to belong to the last, or Levitical law-code. The history gives the pathetic account of Eli's death; the horrible cruelty of Saul to the priests at Nob; the flight of Abiathar to David, and the long friendship between the two. Is all this a baseless invention? If not—and no sane man could suppose that these narratives had absolutely no foundation—if then, they have any truth in them, even though they be but popular tales, then the race of Aaron was dominant at a

The facts of David's history inconsistent with the view that the distinction between priest and Levite was of very late origin.

central sanctuary, placed in the territory of powerful Ephraim, and the Levites were a tribe to whom no possessions had been given, but who were dispersed among the rest. If this was done by Moses, all is natural. It was a most enviable position if it were secure; and it would only be secure if the law was so firmly established in the hearts of the people as to be certain of being established in Canaan as soon as the conquest was complete. The people were rebellious and of a stiff neck, but the history describes them as obedient to the law during the days of Joshua and of the elders who had known Moses. The command of Moses could easily be carried out in Joshua's days, for the Levites would readily accept, and the people willingly concede, the exceptional place assigned them. At no other time was it possible, or even conceivable.

The Mosaic origin explains everything.

We have, then, in the circumstances of the Levites a strong proof that the institutions of Moses date from the conquest of Canaan. At no subsequent period could the Levites have been so separated from the rest. And at no subsequent time could the Pentateuch have been written. Not under the kings, or it would have put more favourably the merits of a form of government which had rescued Israel from the depths of internal weakness and decay, and given it strength and empire. Not by Samuel, or it would have been

No other theory can explain the facts.

made more suited to his times, and given more direct aid to his reformations. Not under the anarchy of the Judges. For the ideal state contemplated in the Pentateuch of a people strong in faith and pure in morality, living under the direct protection of Jehovah, was the very reverse of the miserable reality.

The three codes.

This general argument might suffice for our purpose, but a few words may still seem desirable with respect to the three codes, of which we are assured by the disciples of the higher criticism that they are proved by internal evidence to belong to a late period in Jewish history.

The contents of the code in Exodus xx.–xxiv.

Now, in the code contained in Exod. xx.–xxiv., we have brief commands upon a few necessary matters, such as would have been useful certainly for Jehoshaphat's judges, but of which many were equally necessary in the wilderness, and all would have been required on taking possession of the Promised Land. Neither priests nor Levites are mentioned in it, nor any religious matters except the Sabbath, the Sabbatical year, and the appearing before Jehovah at the three great feasts. But bound up with it are promises of supernatural aid in the subjugation of the nations in Canaan, and the words of Exod. xxiii. 20–33 could have been written only in the wilderness, unless the whole be a deliberate forgery. Moreover, if the proof that a law was not kept be proof that it was not enacted,

The non-observance no proof of the non-enactment of a law.

then this code no more came into existence in the days of Jehoshaphat than in those of Moses. For the Sabbatical year never was kept at any time whatsoever, and apparently no more by Ezra than by Samuel or David, even though the seventy years of exile were regarded as a punishment for disobedience to this law. But no great stress is laid upon this code, and of far more importance is the code in Deuteronomy, said to have been incorporated in the Mosaic legislation, early in the reign of Josiah. Now, first, there is here an antecedent improbability; for the argument supposes that this code grew up during the dark days of Manasseh, when that king, with fanatic zeal, did his cruel utmost to destroy priest and prophet, and to root out the religion of Jehovah. There used to be a short way out of this difficulty by assuming that Jeremiah was the author of Deuteronomy; but this theory is abandoned. Not only is it granted that the style of Deuteronomy is classical, while that of Jeremiah is debased by the presence in it of numerous Aramaic forms, but also that very much in the book was utterly distasteful to the priests at Jerusalem,[1] and that Josiah, earnest as he was, could not therefore carry it into practice. Undoubtedly the language both of the Book of Jeremiah and of those of the Kings is coloured by the

The Sabbatical year enacted by it never kept.

The Deuteronomic code could not have grown up in Manasseh's time.

Jeremiah could not have written it.

[1] See Robertson Smith's *Old Testament in Jewish Church*, p. 354.

thoughts and the phraseology of Deuteronomy; but this is the result of the deep impression made by the discovery of the book, and we are told that this impression was made, not by the code, but by the threats contained in other parts of Deuteronomy, because all pious men felt that they must be near their fulfilment.

The Book of Jeremiah coloured by the thoughts and language of Deuteronomy.

But how could a feeling, reaching almost to terror (2 Kings xxii. 11, 13), have been created by a "legal fiction," which grew up when the whole religion of Jehovah was proscribed, and which had no author? Legal fictions get into codes of law by the general consent of lawyers for convenience sake, and because they have been forms long known and used. Usually they were facts first, and came to be fictions by being retained when the facts had changed. Moreover, are we to suppose that Hilkiah and Ahikam, and the other priests and princes mentioned in 2 Kings xxii. 14, were men so devoid of understanding as to be imposed upon by a recent forgery, and take it for a document many centuries old?

The priests and princes of Josiah's time could not have been imposed on by a recent forgery.

But it is said that Deuteronomy was not observed until the days of Josiah, and therefore could not have existed. Let us form a judgment upon this argument by one very remarkable fact. The Israelites kept the Passover once only in the wilderness (Num. ix. 5); they did not keep it again until the rite of circumcision had been renewed at Gilgal (Josh v. 10), and henceforward the Passover drops

Argument from non-observance refuted.

entirely out of sight until the reign of Josiah (2 Kings xxiii. 21). It does not follow that it never was kept, nor does silence prove that other Mosaic institutions were not kept, though probably in a careless and occasional manner. But if thus the Passover, which is an integral part of the history in Exodus, and anterior in its founding to all the laws, was so neglected, the assertion that Deuteronomy did not exist, because it, too, was neglected, rests evidently upon a basis too weak to give us any confidence in its stability.

Adaptation of Deuteronomy to the time anterior to the conquest of Canaan.

There is also much in Deuteronomy which belonged to the time just anterior to the conquest of Canaan; much admirably adapted to win the affections of the people for their law; and it is only by laying stress on detached particulars that it can be pressed down to a late date. But I must hasten to the third, and to my mind the most extraordinary conclusion of Reuss[1] and his followers, namely, that the priest-code, contained in the middle books of the Pentateuch, was subsequent to the Deuteronomic code, and came into existence in the period between Ezekiel and Ezra.

Reuss's theory of the date of the priest-code.

By this theory we are asked to believe that the tribe of Levi was at an early date deprived of all share of the conquered country, and placed in a dependent and inferior position, though it was the

[1] First promulgated in his article on "Judenthum," in Ersch & Grüber's *Encyclopædia* in 1833.

lawgiver's own tribe, while the Levitical law, which gave it compensation, was enacted only after a lapse of some hundreds of years.

Its demand on our belief.

We are asked also to believe that the Book of Ezekiel is a sort of tentative programme standing half-way between the Deuteronomic code and the Levitical, which latter was a scheme for thorough sacerdotal supremacy, palmed off at the return from exile. Yet the royal house of David accepted this new legislation without a struggle, and alike Jews and Samaritans acknowledged it, though an utterly modern creation, as the undoubted law of their ancestors in olden time.

The theory incredible.

We are asked also to believe that the Temple preceded the Tabernacle. It was natural for the mind of Ezekiel in exile to revert to the thought of the temple at Jerusalem, and to connect with it his reform, and his picture of Israel's future. It is incredible that Ezra, or any priest similarly in exile, should have built his scheme of priestly rule upon the tabernacle, and the incidents of the life of wanderers in the wilderness. These Levitical laws all point to the wilderness as the home of Israel at the time when they were framed, and this gives strong internal evidence for their genuineness. If framed at Babylon, in a region the very opposite in all respects of the wilderness, they must have betrayed their falsity: but the higher critics detect no traces of this inevitable result.

The higher criticism taxes faith more than the old belief which it repudiates.

It is difficult to believe all this, and generally we find that the disciples of the higher criticism tax our faith infinitely more than the old belief did which they pronounce incredible. But there is one other thing even more difficult; for we are required to believe that the spiritual teaching of the prophets preceded the ritual teaching of the law.

Isaiah.

Isaiah, at a time when, as the result of Hezekiah's restoration of the temple services, its courts were thronged with worshippers, pronounced all Levitical observances to be an abomination, if offered without purity of heart (Isa. i. 13). Jeremiah, deeply impressed with the teaching of the Book of Deuteronomy, yet regarded the temple as almost a hindrance in his way (Jer. vii. 4); and instead of the Mosaic covenant made at the time when "God took Israel by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt," longed for a new covenant written on men's hearts (chap. xxxi. 31–34). Ezekiel, while explaining and modifying many Mosaic enactments, yet has no desire for the restoration of the Levitical ritual, but looks forward to a new covenant to replace that of Moses (Ezek. xxxvii. 21–28; and xxxvi. 26). Now these two prophets especially influenced the minds of the exiles at Babylon. Their repentance there was emphatically Jeremiah's work. The prophets, moreover, formed a learned, a numerous, and a powerful class. They were too men thoroughly in earnest. Yet we are

Jeremiah.

Ezekiel.

The prophetic class.

asked to believe that their teaching was entirely put aside, and that they quietly acquiesced in this surrender of the work of centuries.

Incredible that their teaching was set aside.

Let us take but a single point. The Levitical theory of the Atonement is most precious when regarded as prefiguring the sacrifice of Christ. Its value lies in its typical teaching. But until the substance was revealed in Christ it was insufficient, and psalmist and prophet alike pronounced it so, and longed for something better to cleanse the heart and conscience than the blood of bulls and goats. And yet we are to believe that prophet and psalmist come first, and the Levitical sacrifice afterwards.

The true value of the Levitical theory of the Atonement.

And herein, perhaps, lies the solution of the difficulty which the higher criticism endeavours to remove. The Mosaic law was not strictly kept, and holy and inspired men laboured less zealously than we might have expected for its observance; partly because the political condition of Israel forbade; partly because it was above the moral state of the people, and was intended gradually to raise and elevate them; but chiefly because it was prophetical. Its great use was for future times. And so placed first, with the prophets to build upon it a teaching full of spiritual longings, and leading onwards to Christ, all is in its place. The temple ritual was replete with typical truth, and this the prophets partly unfolded, and so prepared for its

The solution of the problem which the higher criticism fails to solve.

The Mosaic law prophetical.

Personal holiness the first lesson of the prophets.

full realization in Christ. But their first lesson, from Samuel onward, was that personal holiness must come before ritual. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." And their next lesson was

The expectation of a better covenant their second lesson.

that of hope and the confident expectation of the revelation of a better covenant, which should be written on men's hearts, and which could take away sin. But to reverse this, and suppose that the Levitical theory took form after the uprise of the prophetic schools, and could be inserted in the Pentateuch without stern resistance on the part of the prophets; and to imagine that the change in men's hearts wrought at Babylon by the teaching of Jeremiah, ended in the invention of an elaborate code, framed on the idea of life in the wilderness, and of a moveable tabernacle, all this is incredible; and until stronger arguments have been brought forward in proof, we must respectfully withhold

The three codes Mosaic.

our assent, and continue to believe that all three codes were the work of Moses, and differ chiefly

Their differences explained.

because they were promulgated at different times, and give different aspects of a legislation that was prophetic in its main and most precious teaching.

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